



Maricopa County

News Release

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This Memorial Day Weekend **Protect yourself and your family from West Nile virus!** *Maricopa County reports first 9 Positive Mosquito Samples of this Season*

This weekend, Maricopa County residents will be honoring the brave men and women who have died for our freedoms. With so many people outdoors, it is important to protect our families and ourselves from mosquitoes. Maricopa County Environmental Services Department would like to remind people to take precautions against West Nile virus (WNV).

"Prevention is the best tool we have", said Tom Maglio, interim deputy director of the Maricopa County Environmental Services Department. "We need to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes and also prevent mosquitoes from breeding", Maglio added.

The first nine positive mosquito samples of the season have been confirmed this month by Maricopa County Environmental Services department. The department conducts year-round surveillance of mosquitoes: collecting samples and running tests on samples collected from many locations throughout the Valley.

"The more we can control our mosquito population, the more we can control this virus," said John Townsend, Environmental Services Department Vector Control Division manager. "This is why it is very important that we all do our part and prevent mosquitoes from breeding in our yards and neighborhoods," said Townsend.

WNV is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. Less than 1% of individuals who are bitten will be affected. Approximately 20 percent of people infected with West Nile virus will feel flu-like symptoms occurring three to 15 days after the mosquito bite. Symptoms may include fever, headache, nausea, vomiting, swollen lymph glands, and skin rash.

A small percentage of people who are infected with WNV will experience severe symptoms such as meningitis, encephalitis, paralysis or even death. Persons with weakened immune systems are more susceptible and those over 50 years of age have the highest risk of severe disease. If a person thinks he or she has WNV symptoms, he or she should consult their health care provider.

So far this year, Maricopa County Department of Public Health has not received laboratory-confirmation of human cases of West Nile virus infection. In 2004, Maricopa County led the nation's counties with 355 people infected with West Nile virus; and 14 people died from the disease in Maricopa County.

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Take these precautions to prevent WNV infection:

- Eliminate mosquito-breeding sites around the home by removing standing water in potted plants, tires, bird baths and other containers where water may collect.
- Remove unnecessary clutter.
- Repair window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out of the home.
- Make sure pools and decorative ponds are properly maintained and operational.

"After you've mosquito proofed your home, work with your neighbors to clean up their yards," Townsend recommended.

Wherever you may be this weekend, bring your insect repellent along and please follow label instructions, especially for use on children. Share your insect repellent with those around you. Additionally:

- Wear light colored clothing with long sleeves and pants.
- If possible, avoid outdoor activity before dawn and after dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Use protective clothing and insect repellent when exposure to mosquitoes cannot be avoided.

For more information on West Nile virus, to set-up an appointment to obtain mosquito eating fish at no cost to you, to report green pools, file any mosquito related complaint, register on the Fogging Notification System or for WNV materials or presentations for your group/organization, please call the West Nile Virus General Information and Help Line at (602) 506-0700, or visit <http://www.maricopa.gov/wnv>.

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For more than 50 years, Maricopa County Environmental Services department has been working with our community to ensure a safe and healthy environment. The department serves the nation's fourth largest county with a population of nearly 4 million people. Using innovative methods, our Environmental Health professionals take proactive steps to regulate the food safety in eating and drinking establishments, work with stakeholders to keep our water supply free from contamination, and provide surveillance/enforcement activities to help minimize vector borne health risks.

*To find out more, visit esd.maricopa.gov or call (602) 506-6616. Follow us on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/mcenviro>
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